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ON THE COVER

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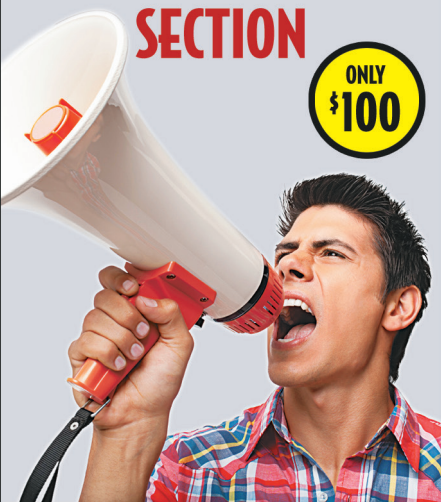


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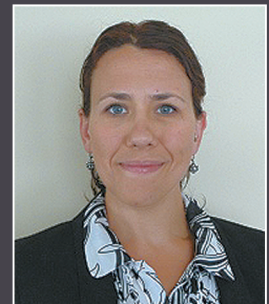
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Romance on a Stick

I always raise an eyebrow when I think of “romantic dining.” I know, it’s a thing. But I’m wondering what, exactly, is romantic? I’m not poo-pooing the whole thing, I’m trying to suss out what it means, especially for an issue that features the topic. You might notice that I threw in a piece on medical tourism as part of our “romantic getaways” section. I’m stretching definitions a bit. I’m aiming for context and intention. In terms of medical tourism, it’s more like, “Honey, love of my life, I want to have children with you. Let’s go abroad and undergo reciprocal in-vitro fertilization.” There might not be a Hallmark card for it, but there’s a whole lot of love in that scenario.

Much the same can be said for any meal or drink or dessert shared between two people in love...or in lust...or in a-little-more-than-like. Bradley Traynor gets to that when he offers up five offbeat places for Valentine’s Day. I have one to add to the mix that’s not offbeat, but is definitely considered romantic. Does it fit the bill?

After our January First Thursday at The Melting Pot, I decided to give fondue a try. Sure, I’ve had fondue before, whether the taleggio greatness up at Scott Graden’s New Scenic Café in Two Harbors or at my own apartment with my red electric pot from Target. But I’ve never gone to a fondue restaurant for a whole meal that’s been prepared by dipping things in hot liquid. Oh, what fun. I wasn’t there on a date, so the friend who joined me for First Thursday is my surrogate for assessing

whether or not it would be romantic, and I’ll tell you that it’s not just hype (“Oh, you guys should go for fondue! It’s soooooo romantic!”), it passed with flying colors.

We went for the four-course fondue meal. Together, we chose a cheese course, ours was the Alp & Dell option made with gruyère, raclette and fontina cheeses, white wine, garlic, mustard, lemon juice, and black pepper. It was constructed right in front of us (I took mental notes) then we were given pieces of apple, bread, broccoli, cauliflower, and cherry tomatoes to dredge through the glorious goo. Let’s stop and assess right here. Anything involving melted cheese will automatically get my pulse going a little faster. And if someone actually does all the putzy prep work by cutting up all those food items into smaller pieces, I’m yours. The risk at this point was that I was falling in love with the kitchen staff who prepared these goodies.

After choosing our own salads (I had the house salad and my friend had the pear and gorgonzola salad), we had to choose which style of entrée prep we wanted, as in, what did we want to be dipping our entrée meat into for cooking? There were two bouillon (broth) options, a bourguignonne (oil) option, and a coq au vin (wine) option. Since I’m not a drinker and the cheese course was a little wine-y for my preference, we knocked out the wine option. The broth would be tasty at some point, but perhaps not for our maiden fondue voyage. These choices that



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are shared are an interesting test for romance...can two people come to a cooperative decision about the cheese course? The entrée liquid? CHOCOLATE? It's all about compromise and harmony. And, luckily, we had that going for us and chose baptism by oil. Then, we each ordered three different meats/foods for ourselves from a section of delicious offerings and sat back as our raw meats, raviolis, dipping sauces, tempura batter, veggies, and oil arrived safely and soundly at our table.

Speaking of cooperation and harmony, what I can tell you about fondue is that it is a time that is ripe for learning and laughing. And those two things make me amorous every time. We're given some good instructions for cooking the different meats and went at it, making a mess and a lot of fun as we went. At one point, I dipped a piece of broccoli in tempura batter and deep-fried it to a crisp and professed my love to it. Sumptuous. The shrimp, steak, chicken, and pork that we'd chosen was no match for our full stomachs, so I cooked up the remaining raw meat and got a to-go box for the rest of it. Not as lovey-dovey, but very practical. Which can be romantic too, you know.

Ending our meal with a chocolate-caramel "turtle flambé" dessert fondue was something that neither of us will regret. It was impressive in presentation (FIRE!) and we made room in our dessert compartments for the pieces of pound cake, bananas, crisped rice bars, brownies, and other sweets that were dipped into the delectable chocolate. If I'd had a deep-fried tempura-battered piece of broccoli left over to try, I'm sure I would have dunked it right in. Since I place high value on interaction, cooperation, laughter, and talking (as well as I love to make and eat food), The Melting Pot definitely gets my nod for a "romantic dining" establishment, and I can't wait to try it with someone I'm actually dating. But my friend gets major props as being highly dateable, and I'm sure his boyfriend agrees.

Whatever your plans, wherever you go, whoever you're with, make every day a chance for romance. With to-go boxes.

With love and thanks,



Audrey

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OUR LAVENDER

A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

There Are Words For It

It was clear as day in April 2014 when an armed Cliven Bundy and gang faced down federal agents after years of grazing their cattle illegally on federal lands free from fines or punishment.

Now son Ammon and brothers Ryan and Mel, with a rag-tail group of armed secessionists, have taken over the Malheur National Wildlife Sanctuary in Harney County, Oregon. Ludicrous as the situation appears, and as chilling a contrast as their peaceful reception makes to the many recent murders of unarmed people of color, the situation does illuminate what aims, other than white-male-privilege and testosterone-fueled posturing, drive the group.

Crucial, and too lengthy to detail here, are the struggles, extending back into the nineteenth century, for the control of our country's western lands. Early cattle barons took over hundreds of thousands of public lands for stock grazing, and that, in a word, eventually led to Bundy's original standoff.

The current takeover was triggered by Oregon ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond's arrest for arson after torching 139 public acres to disguise deer poaching activities. Convicted in 2012, they were resented to five years in prison in October 2015. They surrendered peacefully to federal agents. Nevertheless, the Bundy brothers decided to

create a sanctuary for "sovereign citizens" to oppose a "tyrannical" federal government (the very tyrant that granted Ammon a \$530,000 small business loan in 2010). They've been settled in for four days, now (as of press time), and plan on staying "for years." They are also beseeching supporters to send "snacks" and "socks" via the above-mentioned tyrant's USPS system.

Many say "terrorists," the press dilutes to "armed protesters," or ignores. I suggest two others: the highfalutin "cockalorum," a self-important little man, and the down-to-earth "jamoque," an all-around doofus identified by eye injuries sustained while trying to pick his nose, according to *Concourse* journalist Albert Burneko.

There are disturbing race and class differences in how things are being handled, but there has been no bloodshed. Malheur is remote, contained; outwait-then-prosecute seems the sanest tack. But the Bundys best consider: enraged birders are gathering in neighboring Burns. Malheur is home to some 320 avian species and the birders number 40,000,000 worldwide, far outnumbering the Bundys. By their own recent manifesto, they're silent sneakers on the ground, watching, photographing, documenting every transgression of the usurpers upon property that they, too, consider their own. ■

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Puritans vs. sensualists in the Tony-winning *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. Director-choreographer Joe Chvala shares,

“The choreography is very character-driven. It establishes who all the groups and factions are: the ladies of the evening, the Texas Aggies, the Angelette danceline, and the Melvin P. Thorpe singers. Tommy Tune (Drama Desk Win-

ner for the 1978 production) had a way of making really memorable little gems that added context and kept the story going while making really entertaining dance happen simultaneously, so I am following his lead and making the dances very character-driven and very much about the groups that are dancing and what purpose these dances serve in telling the story.”

FAHRENHEIT 451

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In 1953, Ray Bradbury wrote what still looms as one of the most important science fiction novels ever, *Fahrenheit 451*. Sixteen years later, he wrote its stage version. Theatre in the Round director Linda Paulsen says, “Viewed as a futuristic story of censorship, Bradbury was actually concerned about the impact on education. He saw it in the devaluing of teachers, the shortening of the school day, the focus on facts rather than comprehension. He saw a future where focus was not on education but on spectacle, focus on the ‘what’ not the ‘why.’ Firemen evolved into the destroyers of books only because the public had already begun to censor itself. You could say that, through extreme political correctness, the effort became so large that the government got involved to handle the job. With the power given over to the Fireman, they then also became the enforcement arm.”

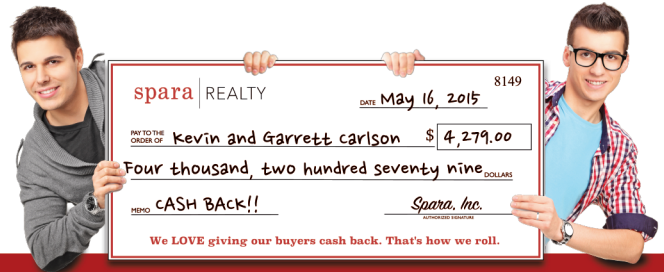
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

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Director Joel Sass has created a stage adaptation of Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, scripted by eight actors as a memory play set in the abandoned mansion of Miss Havisham, an older recluse who never got over being rejected

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ➔

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Trainspotting. Photo by Rich Molby

by her fiancé of long ago.

Sass points out, “The novel is immense in scope and has many subplots; I’ve chosen to focus on the ‘fairy tale’ architecture in Dickens’ story — the lives of two orphans (Pip and Estella) who are each adopted by a ‘fairy godparent’ who wants to raise their child to achieve things the adults did not: respectability or revenge. But the children then have to learn their own lessons and make their own choices about how to find happiness in their lives.”

TRAINSPOTTING

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It’s a good time to revive *Trainspotting*, the play, as Minnesota has been plagued in recent years with numerous heroin deaths. There are also the unceasing reports of ever-increasing poppy output in Afghanistan, the plant from which heroin is derived.

Harry Gibson’s stage adaptation of Irvine Welsh’s book is being revived by Shadow Horse Theatre at the Phoenix Theatre. It penetrates the trials of addiction in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the face of both AIDS and unemployment.

Actor Craig Hostetler observes, “The addiction becomes a vacuum, a black hole, self-serving, that takes away the ability to act on anything else. It’s stitched into your mental fabric. And other people are afraid of that, afraid that they’ll be pulled into it. So addicts are stigmatized.”

Director Peter Beard says, “We are seeing a resurgence in heroin usage here in the United States, what some even label as an epidemic. This play shows the price those suffering from addiction must pay. I’m interested in what motivates someone to lose themselves in their addiction.”

WINNING DAD

www.winningdad.com

When we haven’t worked through our anger issues as queer

people we may revert to shock techniques and in-your-face projections at those we think “just don’t get it.” However, this can have potentially irrevocably tragic ramifications if we don’t catch ourselves. Angry positioning, even in the name of good and righteousness, can backfire.

Anyone who has ever felt enraged about a conservative loved one holding fast to their prejudice against homosexuality can relate. You know, the kind of person whose very presence and disregard for you says right off that you are a second-class promiscuous citizen. You feel it in their presence and you hear your “lesser-ness” as intoned in their very voice.

But what if you trick such a

bigoted person in order “to teach him a lesson” rather than do the hard work to bring him/her to understanding?

Seattle director/writer Arthur Allen scathingly explores this behavior in a way that will offend some, though not all, activists in his bravely groundbreaking new film, *Winning Dad*. An endearing Jake Street plays Colby, a lovable teddy bear whose emotionally armored dad, Mike, played by Chuck Sigars, cannot and will not accept his son’s gayness. His homophobia is layered like tectonic plates. Writer/director Allen, who also plays Rusty, the man Colby loves, decides to “fix” the situation, and catastrophe ensues.

Sigars is a powerhouse. His stoicism is palpable and wrenching. If independent films could garner Oscar nods, Sigars would be a shoo-in. The references to Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and gay master novelist Melville’s *Moby Dick* are blended achingly into the mix. You can tell why Allen’s sensibility is so exquisite.

The northwest mountain images enchant. Ellen McLain as Mike’s wife/Colby’s mom will rip your heart out. A spunky Megan Jackson as daughter/sister Jamie, charms with her political bravado but makes us wonder if incessant questioning of conservative values can actually lead to a backlash against progressive values. *Winning Dad* is for anyone willing to look at the human heart and how angry political attitudes can thwart resolution and healing. ■



Winning Dad. Photo by Arthur Allen

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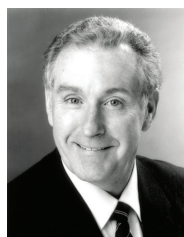

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OUR LAVENDER

OBITUARY | BY GEORGE HOLDGRAFER

Tim Campbell (1939-2015)



Tim Campbell in 1985.
 Photo by Mark Luinenburg, courtesy of Tim Campbell

Not Surprisingly, *Lavender's* 2015 Person of the Year(s) Wrote His Own Obituary

Gay rights activist Tim Campbell died December 26, 2015, in Houston, Texas, at the age of 76, from esophageal cancer.

Campbell was perhaps best known as the publisher of the *GLC Voice* newspaper in Minneapolis, which came out from 1979 through 1992. During that period he was the go-to person in Minneapolis for the media whenever they needed a quick quote on some gay-related event.

Because Campbell was also known for a number of street-theater type gay-rights protests scattered over the years, it chagrined a few more polite gays and lesbians when he became their "voice." Campbell often remarked that he made a terrible mistake when he named his paper the *GLC Voice*.

Campbell was pushed into an openly gay lifestyle by the U.S. Army in 1962 when he was called to register for the draft. He checked the box for people who had "homosexual tendencies" even though he had never yet acted on them. For years thereafter, Campbell had to list "1Y" as his draft status on every application for employment he filled out. This had a chilling effect on his pursuit of highly respectable employment, so he worked in department stores and waited tables.

Campbell was asked by Fight Repression of Erotic Expression (FREE), a University of Minnesota gay and lesbian group, to be their spokesperson with the press at a rally for equal employment for gays and lesbians. That march passed from the university campus downtown to the offices of Northwestern Bell Telephone Company in 1971. From then forward, the local press kept his phone number handy.

Campbell himself often said his most important contribution to the national drive for gay rights was some energy he put, during 1974 and 1975, into convincing *The Advocate* (a national gay publication); the Minneapolis and St. Paul newspapers, including the university's *Minnesota Daily*; the *Washington Post*; Dear Abby (Van Buren); and the *New York Times* to direct their style sheets to use "gay" or "gay and lesbian" or "lesbian and gay" instead of "homosexual." Ever since the mid-1960s, gays themselves throughout the gay bar system and other fledgling organizations had started using "gay" for ourselves.

Campbell was also very involved in helping gays, lesbians, and others to recover from alcoholism and drug addiction. He sobered up August 25, 1973, in Minneapolis. He was the founding chair of the Lambda Sobriety Center in Minneapolis in 1981.

Campbell received his master's in French Literature from the University of Texas in 1969. He studied in Tours, France, and was theoretically working on his doctoral dissertation while teaching at the University of Minnesota, Morris Campus, from 1970 through 1972. Just last year, Campbell finally wrote up a lot of his studies about Marcel Proust and posted them on a blog called ProustByCampbell.blogspot.com.

From 1973 to 1974, Campbell joined with Jack Baker and Mike McConnell in conducting accredited seminars in sensitivity training on gay issues for students in the Education Department at the University of Minnesota. He conducted similar seminars for police officers and other professionals, including chemical dependency counselors, over the next few years. Campbell, Baker, and McConnell encouraged each other in the belief that they could "change the way people see gays" by working to do so. That was the purpose of Jack and Mike's gay marriage, the first of its kind in the United States, in May 1970.

Campbell was born December 18, 1939, in Leavenworth, Kansas. He was preceded in death by both parents, William Patrick Campbell and Betty Jane Dusenbery Campbell, and by his sister Patricia Campbell. He is survived by brothers Bill Campbell of Roswell, GA; Ed Campbell of Beaumont, TX; Mike Campbell of Beaumont, TX; and Charlie Campbell of Seattle, WA; and by sisters Clarice Campbell Hebinck of Mary Esther, FL; and Dee Ann Campbell Soileau of Beaumont, TX.

Campbell was also preceded in death by Jerome L. Smith, who partnered with him to found the Lambda Sobriety Center in Minneapolis, and by Bruce Brockway, who partnered with him to start the *Positively Gay* newspaper, which soon became the *GLC Voice* newspaper.

Besides his living brothers and sisters, honorable pallbearers include Lad Sledz of Minneapolis; Vickie Judkins of Eau Claire, WI; Brian Stacey of Arizona; Ed Bloomquist of Minneapolis; and Luke Coulson, Don Kelly, and Philip Bowman, all of Houston.

In lieu of flowers or other memorials, persons so moved are encouraged to engage in random acts of kindness, generosity, or courage.


(This obituary was written by Campbell himself, with date of death and age at death supplied by family.) ■



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BY BRADLEY TRAYNOR

FIVE OFF-THE-EATEN-PATH PLACES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day is once again right around the corner. If you're anything like me, you've probably spent more time than you care to staring into space trying to think of the perfect place to take that special someone. Somewhere original. Somewhere delicious. Somewhere with seating available before 10 p.m.

Good news! I've got a list of five fun, off-the-beaten-path options sure to make this Valentine's Day one to remember. At least insofar as the meal is concerned. I'll leave the romance up to you.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ➔



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(Opposite page) The Copper Hen's cupcakes. (This page from left) Rincón 38's bar area. LYN65's dining room. Photos by Hubert Bonnet



STRIP MALL TEASE: LYN65

There's a restaurant in a strip mall in Richfield that's guaranteed to change your image of restaurants in strip malls in Richfield. Tucked away just south of Hwy 62, LYN65 is a secret garden of a restaurant, perfect for a romantic evening. Especially if you love food. The entrées are solid, but I recommend smallplating your way across the menu. If you skip the bologna sandwich, we're no longer friends. Trust me. It'll win you bonus points later. As will the burger and the chicken wings. And pizzas. I could go on. Just go.

SECRET BURGER ESCAPE: TIN CUP

Want to surprise your special someone with one of the best burgers in the Twin Cities? If your relationship is built on a mutual love for burgers, the answer ought to be yes. Throw convention to the wind, hop in your car and head down to Rice Street in St. Paul for one of the best kept burger secrets in town. Grab a booth, some pull tabs and an order of cheese curds while you mull over which burger best suits your fancy. This is not fine dining. It's a damn good burger. Pro tip: the fried chicken makes a perfect appetizer. My second favorite in the entire city. You're welcome.

NETFLIX AND A SLICE: GIORDANO'S

If the thought of getting all dressed up to go out for a fancy dinner on a Hallmark holiday makes your teeth hurt, I feel you. Never underestimate the power of sweatpants and takeout. It may not scream romance, but if you've celebrated a few Valentine's with the same special someone, who's screaming? Movie and a pizza will do just fine thank you very

much. And I can't get enough of Giordano's right now. Order up a signature deep dish, an app or two, maybe a salad on their website, then pop over and pick it up. Pair with a binge-worthy TV show like "Making a Murderer" and you've just hit a casual date night homerun.

SOUTHSIDE ESCAPE: RINCÓN 38

I've got a special place in my heart for neighborhood restaurants like Rincón 38. It was, in fact, the very place my partner and I first discovered we were capable of eating damn near an entire menu. In one visit. I promise, you'll be hardpressed not to do the very same thing. Spanish tapas is perfect for date night after all. Explore the menu together, tasting and sharing your way across an amazing landscape. Calamari, cannoli, queso frito the list of favorites is long. Note: they do take reservations, so don't dawdle.

WHY NOT BRUNCH: THE COPPER HEN

Valentine's Day is on a Sunday this year so don't let dinner be your only option. Think outside the box. Spark some romance earlier in the day with a heartfelt brunch at the Copper Hen. Let the coffee and mimosas flow as you lazily wander across their brunch menu, which boasts some pretty memorable fare. The biscuits and gravy, skillet scrambles and steak and eggs are a personal favorite, but you're not really going to go wrong with anything. And by anything, I mean you better order the bacon blueberry breakfast cupcake for your date. And one for yourself, because your date is not sharing. I know. This is another reservation destination, so get a move on. ■

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IRELAND



BY ORLA TIMMONS

ISLAND OF DESTINATION WEDDINGS, HONEYMOONS, AND ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

On a warm, sunny evening in May last year, thousands of people gathered in the Upper Yard of Dublin Castle for a momentous announcement. Rainbow flags were prominently displayed, people hugged and cried, and the mood was joyous. The well-dressed woman tasked with reading out the result looked a tad nervous but the crowd was ebullient, joyous, jubilant.

Just how momentous was the referendum in May? In a word, huge. Ireland, this little island country on the edge of Europe, known mainly for its leprechauns, rabid clergy, and *Riverdance*, had transformed itself from a country where it was still difficult to buy condoms in 1980 to being the first country in the world to vote for same-sex marriage.

Ireland's Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, was there (he had come out on a popular Irish radio show several months before), as was long-term gay campaigner Senator David Norris. For him, the passing of the



(Opposite page) Bay Coast Clare Island Beach Castle Harbour. (This page, clockwise from left) Bay Coast Clare Island Lighthouse. Photos by Kelvin Gillmor; Lakes of Killarney in County Kerry. Photo by Christopher Hill; Dublin Castle. Courtesy of Tourism Ireland; Glendalough is home to one of Ireland's most impressive monastic sites founded by St. Kevin in the 6th Century. Photo by Christopher Hill

Same-Sex Marriage Referendum was the culmination of years of hard work, a dream come true.

The marriage referendum was a unique political happening in Ireland for many other reasons. At 61 percent, the turnout was unprecedented; at 62 percent the “Yes” majority was emphatic. Both the campaign itself and the reaction to the result had never before been seen in Irish politics.

And the positivity continues: 2016 is shaping up to be a year when Ireland once again gears up to welcome visitors for romantic getaways, honeymoons, and weddings. And this year, for the first time, gay weddings!

At Adams & Butler, a high-end private travel designer based in Dublin, we know all about weddings. For over ten years, we’ve been bringing visitors to little-known places and also to parts of Ireland that best showcase our scenery while ensuring our guests stay in out-of-the-way properties like manor houses, tower houses, and, of course, castles. We can organize the perfect wedding for you making it the most romantic, luxurious, or quirky experience you’re ever likely to have.

How about getting married beside the Lakes of Killarney? A jaunting cart will take you on a tour afterward. People have been visiting Killarney since the middle of the 19th century, attracted by the beauty and splendor of the lakes.

Have you ever wanted to stay in a lighthouse? Well, for the ultimate romantic getaway, how about a lighthouse on an island off the west coast? And then discover that the island was once home to an Irish pirate queen? Job done!

If you’re not a fan of island life, how about a castle? We do castles rather well in Ireland. And let’s be clear about this — not droughty, dreary affairs with leaking pipes and creaking doors. Glorious Cinderella-type castles with brightly lit restaurants, inspiring libraries with open fires, state-of-the-art spas, and bedrooms overlooking mist-covered lakes. All you have to decide is whether you want to go horse-riding or do falconry!

Round towers! Romantic you say? Yes, we say. Built by Irish monks and unique to Ireland, there’s one in Dublin in the surprisingly romantic Glasnevin Cemetery but the best has to be in the “Monastic City” of Glendalough in County Wicklow. This county (only an hour from Dublin) consistently tops the polls (along with Kerry and Donegal) as one of the most romantic counties in Ireland.

In Glendalough, “the valley of the two lakes,” a monastic settlement was founded by St. Kevin in the sixth century. This very special place in Wicklow, with its spectacular scenery, rich history, and abundant wildlife, will inspire, delight, and soothe your spirit.

Or how about a candlelit dinner in a cave where you will be serenaded by classical musicians while enjoying your meal? We did this for an Arab princess; wearing a wedding dress sparkling with diamonds, she was flown over the Cliffs of Moher in a helicopter to rendezvous with her new husband for dinner. At Adams & Butler, this is what we do. Everything and anything to make your wedding a truly memorable experience.

For your honeymoon you can experience the quiet green lanes and winding country roads, passing gently flowing rivers and fields of sheep while taking in views of the beautiful Irish coastline from the back of a horse, on a bicycle, or on foot. Or from the back of a Harley Davidson, if you so wish.

Or what about a behind-the-scenes private tour of a well-known whiskey distillery or brewery? Perhaps you and your partner are interested in art or antiquities and would like us to arrange a viewing of a specific collection? We can arrange for you to do that in the company of the curator of the museum or art gallery. And you will enjoy canapés and a glass of champagne along the way.

In Dublin, gay bars include the George on South Great George’s Street, PantiBar on Capel Street, and the Front Lounge on Parliament Street. For something a little bit different, you can try Gay Bingo at the George with Shirley Temple Bar. Shirley established her Sunday night bingo in the George in 1997 and over 850 shows later, she’s still calling the balls!

Dublin’s Pride Festival takes place every year during the summer with a flamboyant parade in the center of Dublin and brunches and entertainment across the city. It’s a summer festival highlight for everyone, gay and straight. Ireland has come a long way and we’re looking forward to embracing the future. Come and celebrate your big day in this funny little country of ours. And leave knowing that you’ve just been part of a piece of modern history. Oscar Wilde would be proud! ■

For more information, contact sales@adamsandbutler.com.

KANSAS CITY



(Clockwise from top left) The Raphael Hotel. Photo by Andy Lien; The Plaza in the evening, perfect for a stroll hand-in-hand. Photo courtesy of Visit KC; The "Spider" at the entrance of the Kemper. Photo courtesy of Visit KC; The Cubano with pork belly at Ophelia's. Might have been the "best bite" of the trip. Photo by Andy Lien; Badminton, anyone? We can play a couples tournament at the Nelson-Atkins. Photo courtesy of Visit KC

BY ANDY LIEN

THE HEART OF AMERICA


Kansas City. Known as the Heart of America, I'll always think of love and marriage when I think of my time spent there. I was anxiously awaiting the Supreme Court of the United States to rule on the topic of same-sex marriage while I was visiting Kansas City in June of 2015, just before coming back to Minneapolis for our own Twin Cities Pride celebration. Such a lens of love colored my view of the place in a romantic, rose-tinted hue. If you're looking for a romantic getaway or midwest honeymoon, consider Kansas City, Missouri. Here's a weekender package to put into your planner.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ➔

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except for Rome. The history is deep and the culture is diverse. And while many different interests can be piqued in KC, from sports to barbecue to war to family-friendly attractions, I think back on my time spent there that was framed by art, parks, food, community, music, and architecture, which would all have plenty to do with how I'd choose to spend a romantic getaway or honeymoon of my own. What I found was a bit of opulence and grandeur grounded in modern-day trends and amenities.

No place was this more obvious than my hotel, The Raphael. Originally constructed in 1917, **The Raphael Hotel** is Kansas City's best-known example of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture. The Raphael features 126 guest rooms and suites with amenities and comforts designed for the modern luxury traveler. My suite was where I retreated at night in a three-room space which rivaled the square footage of my loft in St. Paul. The mornings were light and bright as I padded through the suite in my white terrycloth robe and slippers, sipping local coffee from The Roasterie before going for the chef's special dish at the hotel's restaurant, **Chaz on the Plaza**: Lobster Benedict with fried green tomatoes and caviar. It's the perfect setup for a day of shopping and art.

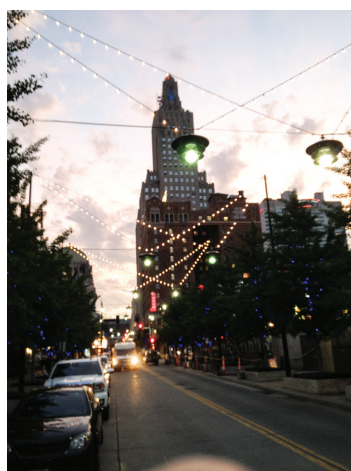
Day 1 – Thursday – Fine Arts

Kansas City is a particularly navigable city to drive and walk, with pockets and neighborhoods that make for easy activity planning. Out the front door of The Raphael is a picturesque view of **Country Club Plaza**, just across Ward Parkway and Brush Creek. Country Club Plaza, also referred to as The Plaza, has been called the “Rodeo Drive of the Midwest” and is a Spanish-inspired shopping district with a number of fountains and statues, restaurants, and close proximity to both the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

At the **Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art**, you will find works by modern and contemporary artists from around the world. The Kemper opened in 1994 and its permanent collection is rotated year-round to give people an opportunity to see “what's new” at the Kemper at various times during the year. The museum is free and easily locatable by the giant “Spider” sculpture by Louise Bourgeois at its entrance, with works by artists such as Damien Hirst, Andrew Wyeth, Fairfield Porter, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Robert Mapplethorpe as part of the permanent collection. It's a small but mighty museum that also holds an award-winning restaurant, **Café Sebastienne**, which comes highly (let me say *highly* again) recommended for lunch before progressing to an afternoon of art at the Nelson-Atkins.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is recognized internationally as one of the finest general art museums in the United States, and currently maintains collections of more than 35,000 works of art. While I was there, I toured the current exhibits and left plenty of time to see the 22-acre sculpture garden. The lawn of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art resembles a badminton court with 18-foot tall sculptures, titled “Shuttlecocks.” For a fun relationship challenge and a nod to our dearly departed David Bowie, wander down the lawn to the “Glass Labyrinth” by Robert Morris. The difficulty is in being able to see through it, but not be able to walk through it. Find each other. Kiss in the middle. Wander back out, hand in hand.

After a day of fine art, enjoy an evening of seafood and take a stroll along Brush Creek near The Raphael; a winding waterway surrounded by lush greenery, with gondolas to rent for an additional air of romance. **Jax Fish House & Oyster Bar** is a quick jaunt away from the hotel



After dining at Cleaver & Cork, a stroll in the Power & Lights District is swoonworthy. Photo by Andy Lien

and serves up some fresh and sustainable seafood for a landlocked city. The fried calamari was light and accented by a dollop of lime aioli. The blue crab cakes were grilled and served with a light lemon sauce. I slurped down an oyster which, in coastless Missouri, was not necessarily part of the local fare, but what topped it was Missouri Hackleback caviar. I enjoyed an entrée of heritage bone-in pork loin from local Missouri vendors after which I devoured a dessert of a decadent dark chocolate s'mores torte accompanied by Jax 'Flying Fish' Blend Coffee by The Roasterie of Kansas City. A lovely end to a day of decadence.

Day 2 – Friday – Community and Culture

Kansas City is a place where minority culture and community flourished and I invite you to partake in some of its greatness. The **18th & Vine** historic district was the center for black culture and life in Kansas City from the late 1800s–1960s. It was the hub of

activity for homeowners, business, jazz music, and baseball enthusiasts, and is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. At 18th & Vine, the **American Jazz Museum** and **Negro Leagues Baseball Museum** are housed in the same building, connected by a gathering space and small theater that plays an introductory film about the 18th & Vine neighborhood. Please watch the film. As I sat there, watching and learning about how the black community in the area formed its own community with its own rules and mores and culture within the larger context of Kansas City and the United States during a time when racism was the rule, I felt a great sense of pride on their behalf, not dissimilar to how I feel when reading about GLBT history. It expanded my empathy and interest in this place and these people with a very remarkable history that I gleaned as I toured the other two museums.

The American Jazz Museum is an interactive and attractive experience that makes my heart beat faster. Whether it's a flashy dress worn by Ella Fitzgerald or Charlie Parker artwork or President Clinton's sax or one of the many listening stations, I was enchanted at every turn. The spaces in the museum are designed with jazz instruments in mind and the educational opportunities include being able to build your own jazz song by changing the drum beats or guitar sounds at the touch of a button on a mixing board. Artifacts such as Louis Armstrong's trumpet can be visited and revered. Also deserving of reverence is the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. Founded in 1990, the museum is dedicated to preserving the rich history of African American baseball. The first professional Negro Leagues were founded in Kansas City in 1920, just two blocks from the museum. The tour, exhibits, photos, sculptures, and artifacts chronicle the history and heroes of the Negro Leagues from their founding after the Civil War to their demise in the 1960s. The appearance — and disappearance — of the leagues are significant to our history, both as Americans and as members of minority groups in America.

For food in the area, I present three very different options that also speak to community and culture in Kansas City. Just down the street in the 18th & Vine neighborhood is **Arthur Bryant's Barbecue**. Kansas City is known for barbecue and barbecue is known by Arthur Bryant. Grab your lunch there and get busy with the barbecue.

Your evening dining options can be paired with what you choose to do with your nightlife. At some point, a trip to the Crossroads Arts District is in order, and I recommend **Affäre**, a contemporary German restaurant using all natural, farm fresh, seasonal food, and supporting local producers as much as possible. The menu is both surprising and comforting. I ate octopus bacon. And liked it just fine. There was a light,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ➔



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delectable tomato bisque with fennel and house-made cheese cracker. My entrée was a humble sandwich with a nice tang: German sausage burger topped with cheese, sauerkraut, and Düsseldorf mustard. I was fortified and ready for some gallery hopping.

Home to more than 400 local artists and 100 independent studios, the **Crossroads Arts District** is one of the most concentrated gallery districts in the nation. If you're lucky enough to be there on the "First Friday" of the month, be sure to go there in the evening during their monthly open gallery event. One of my favorite letterpress studios (I buy their goods at I Like You in Minneapolis) is **Hammerpress**, and going to their store made something of a fangirl out of me. Nearby is gay-owned **Mid Coast Modern** where the modern, handmade movement also reigns supreme with design-centric goods to buy from decor to apparel to Kansas City mementos. I love finding the local-made wares wherever I travel. Then, close the evening with some jazz within the red velvety walls of the **Green Lady Lounge**...the drinks and ambiance make for a sultry end to a day that filled the senses.

If you'd like a night on the town in the Power & Lights District, I'd steer you to **Cleaver & Cork**, one of the newest restaurants to come to downtown Kansas City, which is a gourmet, butcher-driven gastropub featuring Midwestern-influenced offerings. I devoured a beautiful braised pork jowl with jalapeño and fried grits cake. My entrée was the most luscious smoked ribeye with potatoes and asparagus. After dining, go ahead and explore the \$850 million Power & Light District, which is the largest new development project in the Midwest and features eight blocks of dining, nightlife, and entertainment venues. And check out the gay nightlife at any of the handful of gay bars: **Sidekicks Saloon**, **Missy B's**, **Sidestreets Bar**, and **Buddies**. For more information, go to **Camp Kansas City** at www.campkc.com.

Day 3 – Saturday – History, from Frontier to Fancy

There are a couple different day trip options for Saturday, depending on what strikes your fancy. About an hour north of Kansas City is **St. Joseph**, on the way to which we stopped and took the **North KC and St. Joseph Harley Davidson** factory tour. St. Joseph not only has the **Jesse James Home Museum** (where they're *almost* 100 percent certain the outlaw was killed...there's a sign that says "SEE THE BULLET HOLE"), but it's also where the **Pony Express Museum** can be toured. Starting at the Pikes Peak Stables in St. Joseph, the Pony Express riders, with their saddlebags, traveled 2,000 miles west to Sacramento, California. If you're like me and watched the deliciously awful *Young Riders* show as a kid (which may have been my first exposure to a primetime character cross-dressing as Louise turned into Lou to be a rider for the Pony Express) or are just fascinated by that short time in our country's communications history, it's a museum that is worth the visit.

Just east of Kansas City is the town and day trip I'd likely choose for a romantic day with my beloved: Independence. Not that I find President Harry S. Truman to be particularly swoonworthy (his home, the courthouse, and the **Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum** are open for touring and very interesting for a glimpse into Missouri's presidential past), but Independence is a town of many attractions for

couples looking for a day of hand-holding and history. Start with a mule-drawn wagon tour via **Pioneer Trails Adventures** that begins at Independence Square and get a narrated history of the town as you clip-clop along its streets. After the fun and funny ride, grab lunch at **Ophelia's Restaurant & Inn**, which offers an infusion of cultural flavors in an eclectic American menu. I had a light salad followed by a ridiculously good Cubano sandwich with pork belly, which may have earned my "Best Bite Award" of the trip, no lie. I would have stayed for dessert if there hadn't been history to be had across the street: President Truman worked at **Clinton's Soda Fountain** as a lad, so I did my patriotic duty and had myself an ice cream cone. 'Atta girl.

While romance may not be apparent while touring Independence Square and the town's historic jail, what is sure to be fraught with drama and heartbreak is the visit to the **National Frontier Trails Museum**. Not only does the Trails Museum tell the story of the exploration, acquisition, and settlement of the American West, the interpretive exhibits guide visitors along the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails. Quotations from trail diaries are extensively used, allowing pioneer travelers to tell of their experiences in their own words. Adding my own tale to the mix, I would definitely check in on Facebook from the start of the Oregon Trail saying that the love of my life had died of dysentery. What's more romantic than a white-lying virtual widow?

Okay, that's not that romantic. But I'll tell you what is: the **Vaile Mansion**. Independence has a number of lovely homes and estates (another tour-worthy visit is the **Bingham Waggoner Estate**); the Vaile Mansion is the crown jewel of the town. Built in 1881, the Vaile stands as one of the nation's premiere examples of Second Empire Victorian architecture. It has been featured on A&E's *America's Castles*, and on HGTV's *Christmas Across America*. The home has had a number of owners and uses, but its current state of elegance is due to a labor of love and money. The tour guides dressed as maids will explain all of the luscious architectural details as well as a few of the lascivious historical details, such as how the erotic painting above the bed in the husband's room got the wife ostracized by the women of Independence because she allowed it to exist. What'd I say? ROMANCE.

Return to Kansas City, get gussied up, and end your day with fine dining at **Pierpont's at Union Station**. Built in 1914, Union Station fell to the same state of underuse and disrepair as St. Paul's Union Depot, and also saw a similar revival and renovation, which was completed in grand fashion in 1999. Within Union Station, Pierpont's has been called the "culinary jewel" of Kansas City, with food and service as memorable as the historic setting. Named for railroad baron J.P. (Pierpont) Morgan, Pierpont's turn-of-the-century decor provides an elegant backdrop to casual, yet elegant dining. The aged steaks are not to be missed and the bartenders sling drinks from a sexy 30-foot-tall mahogany bar. Go back to the hotel happy and fat after a day of history and food.

Whenever you take a trip to Kansas City, whether for romance or not, explore and enjoy what it has to offer as the Heart of the Midwest. Find out more information at www.visitkc.com and www.visitmo.com. ■

RESOURCES: The Raphael www.raphaelkc.com - Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art www.kemperart.org - Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art www.nelson-atkins.org - Jax Fish House & Oyster Bar www.jaxfishhouse.com/kansas-city - 18th & Vine Jazz District www.kcjazzdistrict.org - American Jazz Museum www.americanjazzmuseum.org - Negro Leagues Baseball Museum www.nlbm.com - Arthur Bryant's Barbecue www.arthurbryantsbbq.com - Affäre www.affarekc.com - Crossroads Arts District, Mid-America Arts Alliance www.maaa.org - Hammerpress www.hammerpress.net - Mid Coast Modern www.squareup.com/market/midcoastmodernkc - Green Lady Lounge www.greenladylounge.com - Cleaver & Cork www.cleaverandcork.com - Pony Express National Museum www.ponyexpressjessejames.com - Ophelia's Restaurant & Inn www.opheliasind.com - Vaile Mansion www.vailemansion.org - Pierpont's at Union Station www.pierponts.com, www.unionstation.org



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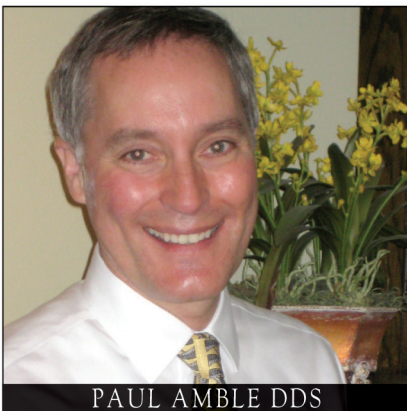
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MEDICAL TOURISM



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BY SHANE LUECK

GOING ABROAD FOR HEALTH CARE

When Tai and Jess began thinking about expanding their family, the options available didn't seem quite right. In fact, they found that in vitro fertilization (IVF) in the States was significantly higher priced than one would hope. In addition to price and quality of care, the couple began considering the privacy of receiving medical care abroad.

With the help of Maria Maldonado, founder and CEO of Trip4Care, Tai and Jess traveled to Spain to receive their IVF treatment. "We were able to find them the best combination of price, quality, and privacy they desired," Maldonado said. "Our mission is to help our clients find affordable medical/health

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care away from their place of residence without compromising the quality or experience level of the providers while delivering an unforgettable and positive experience along the way. We want to ensure that people can find affordable, quality healthcare that won't break their budgets and let them experience the world in ways that they may never have been available."

What Maldonado is referring to is known as medical tourism: people traveling to other countries for medical treatment and care. Medical tourism is also known as health travel, medical travel, or global health care, and it is now rapidly gaining acceptance by both the public and the medical community at large as a real solution to the high cost of health care in the United States. In other words, medical tourism can be defined as the act of traveling outside one's own area of residence for health care.

"This can mean driving two-hundred miles from your home town, or flying half way around the globe to an exotic culture you know nothing about," Maldonado adds. "For people without insurance, those who have to wait unacceptable amounts of time for care, or those needing medical procedures that insurance won't cover, medical tourism offers an attractive alternative to rising healthcare costs."

Certified by the Medical Tourism Association, Trip4Care focuses on finding the highest quality providers and facilities in destinations that are affordable and attractive to those who want to receive the best care at the best prices.

"Our team distinguishes itself from the competition because of our combined healthcare backgrounds in the operating room, quality, safety, and risk areas," Maldonado says. "We partner with the best specialists and hospitals around the world and treat each client as a valuable human being with intrinsic worth. We know that we can impact the world in a positive way through every person we work with by allowing them to become healthier and invest in their futures."

Trip4Care can help clients find many kinds of treatment and/or surgery. In fact, their most common treatments sought by clients are orthopedic surgeries, fertility treatment, stem cell treatment, cosmetic surgery, dental treatments, and bariatric surgery. However, some of the services that might be of interest to the GLBT community include fertility treatment (IVF, Reciprocal IVF, sperm/egg banks, etc.), surrogacy, gender reassignment surgery, or cosmetic surgery.

Maldonado adds, "In addition, our team is composed of people who do not judge people on gender, race, orientation, or belief. We are all out to help people in whatever ways we can, and want the best for each of our clients."

Tai and Jess utilized Trip4Care for their reciprocal IVF, where the egg from one woman is harvested, fertilized, and then implanted into another woman (her partner in this case) to become pregnant and carry the child. Normally, the process goes off without a hitch; however, Tai and Jess' work schedules made it necessary for them to travel to Barce-

lona twice. Also, because they had some time in between their first visit and the actual IVF treatment, some of the testing had to be done twice, something that Maldonado assures was beyond their control and had to do with their work schedule and planning. She says, "We do everything we can to try to prevent surprises but sometimes they are unavoidable."

Luckily, their IVF was successful on their first attempt, and Tai and Jess are expecting their baby in early February. Maldonado says Trip4Care will be celebrating the birth.

Although Tai and Jess are just one couple that Trip4Care has helped secure health care for, Maldonado says Trip4Care works with many different kinds of people, working with various client needs. People without health insurance or people with health insurance looking for a procedure not covered by their policy (i.e. plastic surgery, fertility treatment, stem cell treatment, dental treatment, or bariatric surgery), for example. Trip4Care also works with people with health insurance but high deductibles, people looking for a treatment that it is not yet FDA approved but that is already being performed in other countries, and people with health coverage but on waiting lists for a particular treatment (i.e. this is a common reason given by people from Canada).

For those who have never traveled outside of their countries or countries like their own, Maldonado says there are some misperceptions about the quality of care that is available. According to her, these clients are often surprised that the care that is provided outside of their country can be of much higher quality than they are used to.

"In addition, other countries also often seem to provide much more time with patients, getting to know them as people," she says, "which is part of the human touch that we seem to have lost in health care in the U.S. One of my partners was surprised by some of the processes that he saw used in hospitals throughout Mexico in his field of specialty. He had never seen anything like it in the U.S. and wondered why there wasn't more international cooperation in his field."

Not only will clients receive the attentive health care they need, but Maldonado says medical tourism comes at a fraction of the price they would pay in the U.S. "Pricing in medical travel is transparent, which helps the client avoid any kind of financial surprises when they receive the final bill," she says. "The costs vary throughout the world and we can help people find the best combination of destination and prices to meet their needs. There are some destinations used by others in the industry that we do not believe are in the best interests of our clients. We feel that there are additional medical risks that other medical tourism facilitators may be unaware of that we don't want our clients to face. This is why having a team with a clinical and public health background distinguishes us because we identify problems that may not even be visible to other medical tourism companies." ■

Visit www.trip4care.com for more information.

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ASSUME THE ECOSEXUAL POSITION

BETH STEPHENS AND ANNIE SPRINKLES



BY SHANE LUECK

The two did a photo shoot together in 1990 and stayed in touch. Some years later, in 2004, they “got together for a date, had three days of wild sex together, and the rest is herstory.”

Attendees of Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle’s upcoming presentation, titled “Ecosexual Revolution,” had better be prepared. That is, be prepared for an eye opening night of candid discussion and a glimpse of the world seen through the eyes of the presenters.

Beth and Annie live and work together in Boulder Creek’s coastal redwood forest and in an old Victorian cottage in San Francisco. Devoted to developing the ecosex movement through art, theory, practice and activism since 2004, they’ve produced numerous ecosex symposiums, ecosex weddings, workshops, lectures, walking tours, and art exhibits.

Beth is a West Virginia girl who moved to Boston to study art. She was a “raucous punk rock dyke playboy type,” she says. She then went on to get her masters in fine art at Rutgers. She earned a job at the University of California in Santa Cruz as a professor of art, where she has now been teaching for 20 years. As a solo artist, Beth worked as a sculptor, installation artist, and conceptual artist doing work about gender, feminism, and queerness.

Annie was a shy valley girl from Los Angeles who moved to Manhattan at eighteen with an interest in filmmaking and sexuality. So she ended up working in adult films for 20 years as a performer, and then later as a producer and director of her own brand of “post porn.” Annie morphed into a performance artist who toured many countries with her one-woman-shows about her life in sex.

The two did a photo shoot together in 1990 and stayed in touch. Some years later, in 2004, they “got together for a date, had three days of wild sex together, and the rest is herstory.”

Just in time for Valentine’s Day, the duo is bringing their “Ecosexual Revolution” presentation to Minneapolis’ Walker Art Center. According to the two women, there are a variety of types of ecosexual people who are doing ecosexuality in various ways. They claim no ownership for the word ecosexual, citing its existence for at least a decade, mainly as a dating term to describe someone who was interested in environmental issues, hiking, and vegetarianism, for example.

They said, “For us it’s about a lot more than that. It’s a lifestyle, it’s about eroticizing nature and connecting with it, it’s taking the Earth as a lover and more. The movement is growing relatively quickly. We’d estimate there are probably 20,000 people internationally identifying as ecosexual. Some are very new age, some are polyamorous, some of us are queer and freaky, some are straight. We like to give

our brand of ecosex a punk rock aesthetic and an edge. Our niche is that we are artists doing ecosex art projects.”

In a joint statement, they shared, “When we wanted to join the environmental movement, and be more active in protesting the destruction, we didn’t fit in so well. It was kind of straight, white, and conservative, or militant. So we wanted to create a faction of the environmental movement that was more diverse, queer, sex positive... So we launched an ‘ecosexual movement’ with our Eco-sex Manifesto.”

Though Beth and Annie’s visit to the Walker during Valentine’s weekend is just one stop on their tour, they hope people will get a sense of what ecosex is about, “then get their ecosexual gaze on, and have an ecosensual experience that will ultimately inspire them to help take better care of the Earth’s resources. We hope people will take away a good art experience.”

During their time at the Walker, Beth and Annie will be doing two different presentations. First, the two are doing a visiting artist presentation about their life and work over the past thirteen years. Then, later in the evening, the women will present their “Ecosex Walking Tour of the Walker” which is a performance that is also a walk, directed by Joy Brooke Fairfield.

That night, Beth and Annie will have four special guest artists as part of the cast. First, Xandra Coe (who went to high school with Beth) and her partner Judy Meath. They recommended their two friends, performance artists Patrick Scully and Heidi Arneson. All four live in Minneapolis. They will help “demonstrate the ecosexercises, share their ecosexual coming out stories, add their two cents here and there, be devil’s advocates, and contribute some diversity and good costumes.”

For more specifics, people are encouraged to attend the evening of February 13; since each walking tour is site-specific, the women admit they don’t really know all that they will do yet.

“We’d say most people appreciate our sex positivity and are right there with us,”

Beth and Annie admit. “And sometimes people think we are a bit extreme and over-the-top and don’t resonate with our ideas of what sex is. Most people who have been on our Ecosex Walking Tours generally, in the end, realize that they are ecosexual too. Sometimes we can be provocative and controversial, for sure. All part of the fun.” ■

For more information about Beth and Annie’s upcoming visit to the Walker Art Center, visit www.walker-art.org. And be on the lookout for more news of their book, titled *Assuming the Ecosexual Position*, to be published by the University of Minnesota Press.



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Our Own Kind of Theater

In the pre-AIDS years of the gay leather community, many leather clubs presented elaborately staged shows at their annual club runs. (In gay leatherspeak, a “run” is an annual gathering attended by members of other clubs.) I have heard that the run shows were especially elaborate on the east coast, where men who were theater professionals shared their talents with other club members and run visitors. I also have heard there was a fair amount of competition among clubs to see who could produce the most fabulous show.

The Twin Cities have long been known as a theater market second only to New York City. In that spirit, over the years the Black Guard of Minneapolis produced some legendary shows for their annual Black Frost run. One year they mounted a complete production of *When Pigs Fly*, Howard Crabtree’s off-Broadway musical. The show was presented at the Mall of America and, if I remember correctly, the Black Guard production even used some of the original wigs and costumes created by Crabtree.

Recently the Twin Cities leather community again has been the beneficiary of the theatrical and entertainment talents of some of its members. Last April’s Minnesota Leather Pride contest weekend at The Saloon introduced the community to a new concept: a leather contest presented on a stage — with actual curtains! — and with the audience seated in rows of chairs in front of the stage. A leather contest with a seated audience has, both for the audience and the contestants, a feel that is quite different from a contest in which the audience is milling about the bar.

The same basic stage setup has been used several more times recently. On Saturday afternoon, Nov. 14, 2015, The Saloon hosted a second presentation of Leather Families Feuding for Charity. (“It was so much fun in 2014 that we decided to do it again,” said the producers.)

The afternoon was modeled on *Family Feud*, the popular game show. Local theatrical actor and director David Coral was again the master of ceremonies, leading a number of five-member “leather family” teams (and a good-sized audience) through a tournament-style afternoon of fun and fundraising. Other community members with theatrical experience handled

staging and props, lights, sound, audiovisual effects, and scoring.

Of course, the creators of Leather Families Feuding for Charity put their own leather-community spin on the questions and answers that made up the game. The afternoon’s questions included “Name a BDSM activity that people take a while to try for the first time,” “Name something that someone might sneak into the supply room to do,” and “Name something sticky.”

The winning team of the afternoon was Dilligaf (that’s an acronym), who chose Youth Link as the charity for whom they were playing. The second-place team of the afternoon was the Atons of Minneapolis (of which team your humble columnist was a member), playing to benefit The Aliveness Project. Minnesota Leather Pride, the producers of the event, also were a beneficiary.

Then, on Friday evening, Dec. 11, 2015, the Atons used the stage setup at The Saloon to welcome the holiday season with their Holiday Extravagasm. The evening’s show was in three acts. Act One featured members and associates of the Atons presenting a newly written leather version of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* (Scrooge was played by David Coral), while Act Two featured associate members of the Atons presenting a kinky spin on the classic Dr. Seuss story *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, written and narrated by Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2015 Steven Patton. The Grinch was played by Karri Plowman, Twin Cities Leather’s master leather craftsman, and the holiday he tried to steal in this version of the story was “Fistmas.”

In Act Three, members of the Atons donned harnesses, boots, jocks, and filmy white tutus and made appropriate ballet-like moves to “The Waltz of the Flowers” from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*. Then the music changed to a thumping electronic version of “The Waltz of the Flowers,” and the dancers’ moves became a cross between Broadway jazz dance and country-and-western line dancing. The crowd loved it.

Shared theatrical events, like those described above, adapt ideas from mainstream culture — a game show, a story by Dickens or Dr. Seuss, or music by Tchaikovsky — by re-envisioning them through our community’s cultural lens. This kind of community theater

is important because it is one of the ways in which a community’s culture is created, developed, shared, and strengthened. Hats off to all the theater folks who share that experience with the rest of the community — and who also help the non-theater folks on the stage look good. ■

See photos of Leather Families Feuding for Charity and the Atons Holiday Extravagasm at www.lavendermagazine.com.



L. Russell Waisanen, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2016.
Photo by Steve Lenius

Mr. Minneapolis Eagle

2016 Contest L. Russell Waisanen was named Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2016 on Saturday evening, Nov. 21, 2015. See more about the Mr. Minneapolis Eagle weekend at www.lavendermagazine.com (search for “Waisanen”).

OUR AFFAIRS

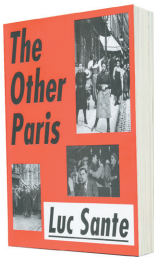
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The Other Paris

Luc Sante

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

\$28



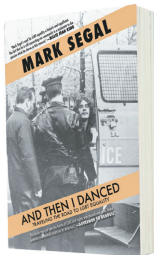
By "Other," Sante is referring to the dark underbelly of the "City of Light" beloved of the casual tourist. (An earlier work, *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*, gives some idea of his bent). Illustrated with more than 300 images — small, but evocative — Sante weaves through the tangled lanes and byways of earlier times, before Baron Haussman's widening and straightening, and leads the reader about the map on the opening pages, through intriguing chapters titled "Ghosts," "Saint Monday," and "Mort aux Vaches." Clochards and drunks, flaneurs and criminals, Sante lovingly traces them all, including show people from such French classics as Jean Renoir's *Boudu Saved from Drowning* and Carné and Prévert's *The Children of Paradise*. The next best thing to being there.

And Then I Danced: Traveling the Road to LGBT Equality

Mark Segal

Open Lens: Akashic Books

\$29.95



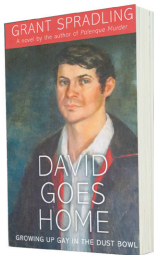
Segal's refreshing, optimistic prose reflects the author's worldview. He learned about discrimination during his coming-of-age in "the only Jewish family in a South Philadelphia housing project" in the 1950s. He learned civil rights basics at the knee of his grandmother, "who celebrated diversity before it was fashionable." Armed with this education, he was prepared to face the hardships of being gay in a pre-Stonewall world. Segal was a founding journalist in the *Philadelphia Gay News*, and throughout his years as an activist hewed to a diplomatic line, devising non-violent "Zaps," once crashing Walter Cronkite's *CBS Evening News* program. His first-hand accounts are memorable, particularly his description of his teenage self, new to New York, inside the Stonewall bar during the 1969 riots. Historic; eminently readable.

David Goes Home: Growing Up Gay in the Dust Bowl

Grant Spradling

Hamaca Press

\$14.95



Spradling's story takes place in 1962, when young minister David Ward seems to have it all; he lives with his lover, Paul, in a spacious apartment on the back of Boston's Beacon Hill. But David is homosexual in a time when gay is not yet a mitigating word, and a man of the cloth to boot. He battles guilt and shame; his dreams are plagued by nightmares, his waking hours by waves of inadequacy and fears that Paul is seeing other men. Things come to a head when Paul surprises David in a compromising situation. David leaves and goes alone back to Claude, Oklahoma, where he was born and raised and where lies the secret of a murder long buried. A gripping, redeeming yarn.

Male Sex Work and Society

Ed. Victor Minichiello and John Scott

Harrington Park Press

\$50



A comprehensive look into the world of male sex work and workers. The introduction, "Reframing Male Sex Work," introduces seventeen chapters, written by diverse authors and gathered under "Male Sex Work in Sociohistoric Context," "Marketing of Male Sex Work," "Social Issues and Cultures in Male Sex Work," and "Male Sex Work in Its Global Context." This framework embraces essays that include case studies, the clients of the said male sex workers, the regulation of the sex industry, public health policies and practices, demographics with information on workers' education and charts detailing descriptions from "I only sell sex to support my addiction," to "I enjoy sex work and am proud of what I do." Minichiello and Scott conclude with "Future Directions in Male Sex Work Research." ■



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2016 Mitsubishi Outlander



Last April, Mitsubishi made a big deal about their 2016 Outlander.

In its third year in its current body, the folks at Mitsubishi told us that they made about 100 or so improvements to this crossover, most of which we will never see. We did see the first integration of the “Dynamic Shield” brand language that will be seen on all models soon enough; however, there were other improvements — sound deadening, ride quality, and overall driving dynamics — that Mitsubishi made to the Outlander.

For someone who goes through 40–60 vehicles a year to evaluate and write about, I’ve heard, seen, and felt it all. A company can claim they have the best of some sort of ride quality. Sometimes, it is proven. Otherwise, I would feel let down. I might like what they’ve done to the nose, while I would question the motivation in doing so.

The truth is that I have to be critical. I only ask the people providing these vehicles for me

to present to you that they show me how they arrive at this claim or that change. In the end, you might buy it. That is what the manufacturers ultimately want: a customer for life.

So, how do we know if these claims are substantiated? I had to drive the 2016 Mitsubishi Outlander to see for myself.

My particular Outlander was the V6-powered GT model with Super-All Wheel Control (SAWC). In Mitsubishi-speak, it is the all-wheel drive model that sits on the top of the line. Due to other changes across the brand, it is the most expensive Mitsubishi offered in America.

The new “Dynamic Shield” design language is well integrated into this three-year-old body. We probably wondered why they didn’t do this sooner. The Outlander now has personality. It looks more interesting and very upmarket. It is about time!

The rest of the Outlander remains the same. Large, wide opening doors for everyone to climb on board, even third row passengers.

The tailgate opens wide and tall to make loading and unloading easier.

From the original 2014 model, only a few changes were made in the cabin. The instrumentation is straightforward with a comprehensive cluster of dials and a small center TFT screen for trip information, fuel, and temperature gauges. The sightlines are lower, but quite good overall. The audio system is at a high position for a quick glance, augmented by redundant controls on the steering wheel. Cruise control, along with adjustable distance sensing, appear on the steering wheel. With paddle shifters mounted on the column and logical stalk controls, Outlander drivers have a lot at the tips of their fingers to make driving pleasurable.

Front seating is huge. Many bodies will find comfort with mild bolstering on the cushion and seatback. The GT SAWC tester I had in for review offered black leather seating that feels upmarket and soft enough for comfort. Second

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row seat room is another story. The seats are multi-adjustable with an improved third row access for its large rear doors. That also means that the second row can be adjusted for leg room and recline. Third row space is possible for adults, only if no one sits in the second row. Otherwise, the third row is more designed for children, or simply folded down for better cargo utilization.

Two engines continue to power the Outlander. Most models get the 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine with 166 horsepower on tap. This GT tester gets the 3.0-liter V6 engine with 224 horsepower. Though you get better fuel economy with the four-cylinder, the V6 offers a bit more grunt to tow up to 3,500 pounds, which is exactly the weight of this Outlander GT. The big attraction to the Mitsubishi is its lighter weight compared to its competition. While most V6s are running with higher performance numbers, the Outlander is suitable for the job it has to do. Though I would prefer more performance from the V6, I will take the fuel consumption average of 21.7 MPG that I achieved in it.

The V6 is also a better choice, thanks to the combination of a true six-speed automatic transmission and its Super All-Wheel Control

(S-AWC) system. Thanks to a switch in the console, there are a few modes for the all-wheel drive system to work in. In snowy and icy conditions, "Snow" mode is fine, but "Lock" offers the best traction on all four corners. On drier pavement, there is a "AWC Eco" mode that saves performance while switching between front and all-wheel control.

Driving the Outlander is a good experience, with its absorbent suspension that takes on rougher roads without a lot of feedback into the cabin. In fact the cabin is much quieter than before, proving the effectiveness of the 100 changes Mitsubishi made to the Outlander. In terms of cornering, it does lean and roll through them.

At the wheel, on-center feel is better than before, and offers a tighter turning radius than most of its competitors. Brakes are solid with good stops in normal and panic situations. Snow and ice stops were predictably long, but could be improved with proper winter tires. However, the Toyo A24 all-season tires were quite adequate in terms of traction and grip on winter surfaces. Overall driving dynamics have certainly improved in the Outlander.

Another attraction to the Outlander is its value. The basic ES model with just front-wheel

drive is priced from \$22,995. Adding S-AWC to the ES model will cost you another \$2,000. This loaded GT S-AWC tester came with a sticker price of \$35,195. This included the Touring package with Forward Collision Warning, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Departure Warning, and the Navigation system. This is definitely a must-have package for the Outlander GT and well worth the extra \$3,350.

On a fundamental level, the Outlander serves its own argument against its competitors. The big question is: to which competitors should you compare the Outlander? Only the Nissan Rogue offers three rows of seating in anything smaller than the Outlander, though the Nissan is shorter by three inches. Mitsubishi counters the Rogue by offering a V6 engine, the capability of towing 2,500 more pounds behind it, and more space and comfort overall. The choice seems a bit more simple.

Just like other Mitsubishi models, the GLBT community also embraced this three-row crossover/SUV as one of our own. On a basic level, the Outlander serves as a great, lighter weight and versatile transport for those needing more cabin and cargo space. Now, there are a 100 more reasons to like the 2016 Mitsubishi Outlander even better. ■

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Doing This Differently

Those who follow me know that I do a lot of public speaking on a variety of topics.

When I started giving presentations in 2010, my talks primarily centered on what it meant to transition genders as an early fifty-something human. Later, I developed a “Trans 101” program which by now I’ve presented probably 40 times.

More recently, I added a motivational component with the title, “Gleaning Authenticity from a Moment of Truth,” in which I share about how one pivotal life moment propelled me to accept that I’m actually female and not male (the gender I was assigned at birth). I have found that this talk touches just about everyone since all of us struggle for authenticity (gender, sexuality, career, or relationships, as examples) in one way or another.

Regardless of the presentation, my introductory remarks always include the statement, “I have a standing offer to meet with any human for up to an hour in a public place to discuss gender or sexuality issues or anything else related to the human condition.”

I put forth that offer not because I’m anyone special or because I have a unique degree of wisdom, or because I believe I’m a pseudo-psychologist. Instead, I’ve found that people are often hungry for *perspective*, whether it’s from me or someone else. I also think that for many, it’s much easier to talk about personal things with a relative stranger than with a friend or loved one. (Hence why more than once in my experience as an airline traveler, I’ve unexpectedly been exposed to [i.e. have unavoidably overheard] a fellow passenger’s life story as he or she shared it with another passenger-stranger.)

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, quite a few people have taken me up on my offer. As you might expect, many transgender folks or parents of trans kids have reached out to me. I’ve also had people want to talk about things that have absolutely nothing to do with gender or sexuality, like whether a particular career path made sense. I even had someone ask to talk about depression and suicide, including the stigma that attaches to suicide survivors (loved ones left after a person voluntarily ends their life).

I always consider it honoring and humbling that someone would want to talk to me on this heightened level of human interaction. Most of the time, I’ve come away from the public meetings having learned as much about myself as I’ve learned from the person I just met. That too, adds to my perspective.

However.

Lately, I have become concerned that my perspective is a bit too nar-

row to justify me showing up as a transgender writer on the pages of *Lavender* magazine month after month. Yes, for sure, as shown by emails and comments on the street, thankfully many readers find meaning in the various pieces I write. Again, that’s quite humbling and something I constantly strive for.

Still, the reality is that I just turned 59. I transitioned relatively late in life (I’m what I call a “gender corrector”) and experienced a whole host of things that younger trans persons have difficulty imagining. Certainly, there’s an element of the trans community (and other communities) that “gets” what I write about, but critically for purposes here, there is also another really big part of the T community that’s not fully represented by my words.

As a result of all of this, I have been thinking. With the help of *Lavender* managing editor Andy Lien, I’ve come up with a novel proposition: on an every-other-month basis, the “Skirting the Issues” column will feature another transgender writer who demonstrates exceptional writing skills, and most importantly, who seems to capture the essence of what it means to be a “younger” trans person in today’s society. This writer must also display a degree of professionalism — *Lavender* has deadlines which must be met and certain writing standards.

In other words, whoever shows up must be both serious about and good at it.

The position would be that of a freelance contributor, not employment, at a rate per piece that is competitive in the Twin Cities market. The specific details: (1) interested applicants should submit a cover letter, a resume, and three writing samples consisting of 700-800 words, double spaced in 11 font size; (2) pieces should be submitted by February 5, 2016, via email to ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com; (3) *Lavender* Media reserves the sole right to accept or reject any submission; and (4) while the goal is to select a single writer, it’s possible that more than one person may be selected, meaning that there may be a number of new writers who show up in this space.

For my loyal, dear gentle readers, please be assured that I’m not going anywhere; you’ll still hear from me every other month. This space is personally critical to my role in the world.

For those who’ve been wanting a breath of fresh air, stay tuned. A new voice with different words may be on his or her or their way. ■

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change (2013) and the architect of The C Project, a new rural Midwest diversity/inclusion initiative (www.elliekrug.com/the-c-project). She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*

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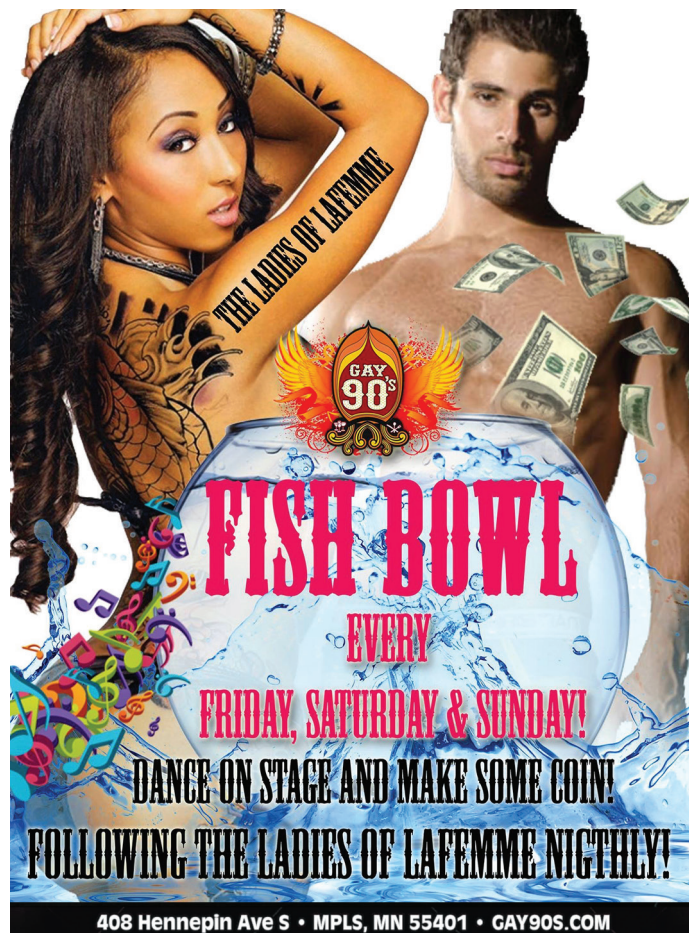


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Fly Away

I'm writing this while looking out the large windows of my hotel on the raging North Sea. The whole of northern England has been under a dark cloud since my arrival. Continuous downpours have flooded most villages, including the one I'm in now, forcing people to take row boats down the cobbled streets, making the whole country look like a gloomy version of Venice. In my posh hotel (well, posh by Northern England standards), I'm perched on an island above all the destruction.

And on my small island is an odd assortment of castaways. It's a decidedly older set of British folk, so attached to their country that even on vacation they stubbornly refuse to leave it for the less expensive and much more temperate beaches of Spain. Instead, they pack themselves into tweed and rain boots and stalk north to this forgotten industrial outposts, the only claim to fame is a beach with tides so troubled that the churning waters claim dozens of lives a year.

I'm the only American in the hotel. I am here because I am an idiot.

My idiocy has nothing to do with my love of forbidding, Northern places of little obvious charm. I actually consider my attachment to unloved places to be a mark of good character. It takes no imagination to travel to Miami Beach in the winter. But it demands a certain admirable lunacy to journey to a place known for its inhospitality even in the best of weather.

So in 2015, when I was planning where to spend the Christmas holiday, I didn't hesitate to select the coast of Northern England.

I was briefly between relationships when I made that plan. But my temporary single status had nothing to do with my decision. I'd never let a relationship stop me from doing exactly what I want, when I wanted to do it. In fact, I was baffled by friends who refused invitations to travel

because of the constraints of a relationship.

"But you really want to go," I'd say, struggling to understand why'd they considered their lover's feelings over their own selfish desires.

This was usually greeted with a helpless whimper and defeated slump of the shoulders. And then they'd return to the comfort of their understandably healthy relationship, while I'd shrug off emotional commitment, toss on a parka and march off for my next solo adventure.

But in 2015, something remarkable happened. I met someone I don't want to leave. Even going to the grocery store without her creates an ache.

Early in our relationship I mentioned that I had plans to go to England over the holidays. Because of her personal commitments, it was impossible for her to join me. And because of my commitment to stupidity, I didn't consider there was an option for rearranging plans so that she could join me. So we ignored the subject for months, because even the mention of the word "England" would cause us both to pout.

And so, stubbornly, I got on the plane even though I didn't want to. And, sullenly, she allowed it because grabbing my ear and dragging me back to the car would have caused a scene.

Now here I am on New Year's Eve. The rising seawater has created an actual moat around the hotel cutting us off from the rest of the world. We've been told that it might be impossible to leave town. In the past, I would have embraced the natural disaster as an opportunity to revel in my own company for a few days more. But I've got a plane that leaves in a few hours. And, most importantly, I've got a reason to get home. So, I'll find an escape and I'll get home. Because, finally, I realize that's where I belong. ■

TROLÍN, UN DIABLITO ROSA

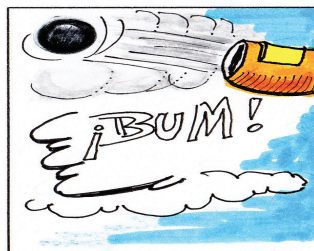
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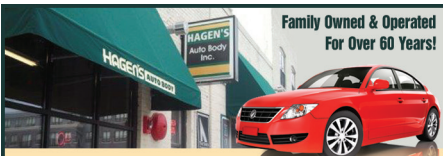
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Out In China

Coined by many national publications as a “gay city,” Minneapolis-St. Paul has earned notoriety in recent years for being a safe and GLBT-friendly place to reside. With more gay establishments per capita than most cities our size, it’s worth bragging about. The privilege of being gay in the Twin Cities has never felt truer to me than in a recent visit from Chen, a friend I made overseas during a year-long contract in Shanghai. Seeing how delighted Chen was by the landscape of all that our community offers brought back a lot of intense memories from my time in his home on the other side of the world.

When I first moved to the People’s Republic of China, the adventure was sublime. I ate noodles, played basketball with local kids, taught dance lessons, and lived a life without mention of RuPaul, Donna Summers, Tom Daley, or Madonna. Having done my research, I had already prepared myself for a lack of queer community in China, but what appeared to be a total absence of queer individuals began to subtly grate on my psyche after a month or so. I had no yearning for a boyfriend or a lover, at a base level, I just wanted an acquaintance I could feel safe sharing jokes with, someone that could fully understand the hapless luck of the homosexual’s disposition in China.

After searching for six weeks, I eventually managed to grab coffee with the first gay person I found, a then 23-year-old Chen. Chen’s parents lived in a rural town, hours from the city. In addition to being deep in the closet, much of his lifestyle was inaccessible to them.

Though he’s quick to express his undying affection toward his mother, Chen described his relationship with both parents as an inexhaustible questioning of “Are you making money?” and “Do you have a wife, yet?”

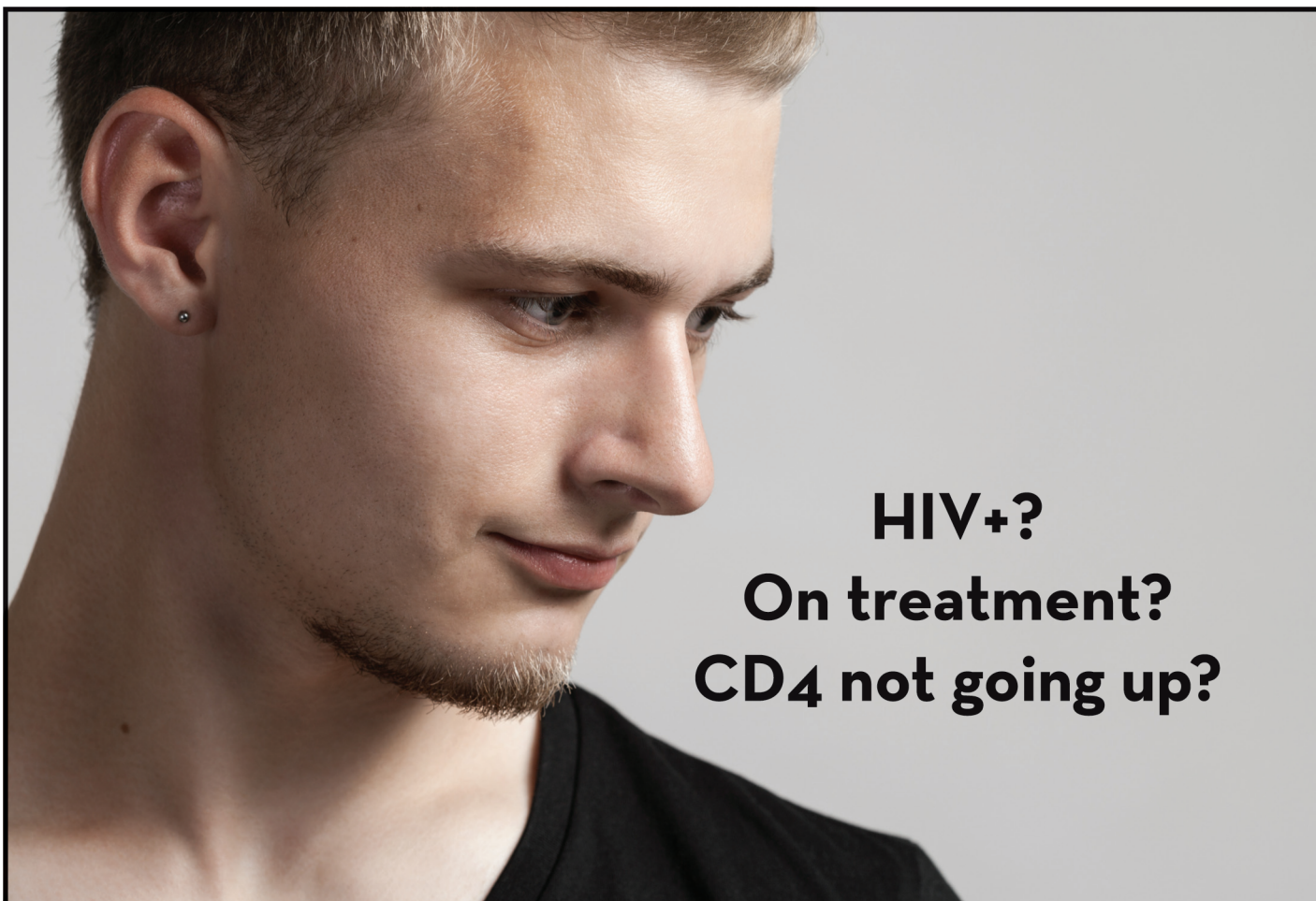
As weeks turned into months, my circle of friends grew larger, as did my awareness of China’s underground GLBT community. Through a maze of alleyways, I was able to find a couple basement-level gay bars where I met a friend named Wizard who worked in the creative industry as a photo assistant. He was one of the lucky few whose working environment and big city lifestyle allowed him to speak more liberally about his sexuality, though Wizard still stays closeted whenever visiting home. “All of my friends in Hangzhou know my sexuality, but back home... two of my teachers and that’s it. One of my teachers figured it out. People can tell it, if you’re really close,” he shared. An aspiring photographer, Wizard’s family pressures him to move back home and get a more stable job on the regular. Obviously, this would be misery on two fronts.

“I’ll probably marry a lesbian,” Chen said one day. These lesbian/gay man partnerships have become an increasingly popular way to cope with family pressure. While it appears this fate may fall upon Chen, Wizard would have none of it. “I couldn’t do that,” he shared. “Some of my friends did it and it just got ridiculous. Usually one lives in a separate apartment, but then they are running over and jumping through a back window to maintain the lie when parents come to visit.” Though homo-

sexuals have been suffering through double lives throughout history, it was still hard for me to wrap my head around the plausibility of a sham wedding in today’s world. That was, until I attended one.

It was hard to watch the ceremony. The couple seemed well matched on paper. Both came from affluent families, both were Shanghai-born, and had similarly comedic personalities...much like on *Will & Grace*. The wedding was, by all accounts, beautiful. This six-hour ordeal began with a well-attended ceremony, followed by an endless receiving line, and ended with the packing of two hundred people into a ballroom set up for dinner. Much like an American wedding, the mothers and fathers of the couple ran rampant, directing, scheming, and schmoozing. On a shuttle transport from the wedding reception to the hotel, Ling left his bride in the front seat to cuddle up next to me in the back. It had been an intense day.

While living in China, there were many times I felt outraged by the lack of justice for the GLBT community. The lack of safety, infrastructure, and support was an injustice impossible to ignore, but still I feel grateful for the experience I had there. In some ways, the state of things in China has given me a window into the struggle of my fellow colleagues who grew up gay in the 1960s and ’70s. It will be interesting to see how things may change as the GLBT community takes more prominence in China over the next five years. For my friends Chen, Wizard, and Ling, change couldn’t come soon enough. ■



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